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DHS FOR OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS THERESA BROWN

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TAGS: [KHLS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CA](#)

SUBJECT: CANADIAN MPS RAISE BORDER AND SPP CONCERNS

¶1. (SBU/NF) Summary: In a recent Border Caucus meeting with the Ambassador and in one-on-one meetings with Emboffs, MPs have expressed a wide variety of issues about the border and cross border travel and trade. Most of the MPs from border provinces say they have as one of their key issues (not just key bilateral issues, but key issue period), the implementation of WHTI. They continue to press for any relief they can get on the passport requirement, arguing that it will hurt trade, tourism, and long-standing relationships between border towns. There is also concern by MPs who live in the Windsor area about bridge expansion and management and a desire for clarity and strategic planning between the U.S. and Canada on this key issue. Finally, it is interesting to note concern among some MPs, notably in the NDP, over the course of SPP. They focus on perceived negatives in NAFTA in the areas of labor and the environment and extrapolate that things can only get worse with the SPP. Embassy is well tooled to push back against these arguments and continues to meet with all comers to explain our positions. End Summary

¶2. (SBU/NF) Ambassador met with some 12 members of the Border Caucus recently for a luncheon and Emboffs have met recently with eight or so other MPs to discuss bilateral and border issues. The following is a compilation of the issues they raised and their views:

-- France Bonsant, BQ - Stanstead, Quebec, Closure of Streets in Stanstead: Ms. Bonsant raised an issue which hit the press June 20 -- the closure to through traffic of three streets in a village in her riding that abuts a Vermont village on the other side of the border, thus dividing what is effectively one town (Stanstead, QB and Derby Line, VT). This is apparently one of those towns where building and streets are literally split by the border and pedestrians who cross into the U.S. while traversing the street are instructed through signboards to report themselves to US Customs. The local community has received reports that the streets will soon be closed by US authorities in order to channel people through the nearest port of entry. TV reports indicate that this would have to be voluntary as the open streets are protected by treaty. Bosant wrote the Ambassador asking for his help in keeping the streets open and maintaining the flow of the towns as they are.

-- Bonsant, Scanner for Christmas Trees: It was clear from these exchanges that Canadian MPs are interested in down-to-earth issues of commerce and travel that affect their constituents. Bonsant also expressed concern about the lack of a scanner for one of the crossings in her riding where hundreds of thousands of Christmas trees are shipped to the U.S. each year but are delayed at the border for inspection. She asked us to look into the issue of increasing efficiency

at key border posts, in this case, by the addition of better technology.

-- Judy Sgro, Liberal - York West, Ontario, Management of Ambassador Bridge: In a meeting with Poloff, Ms. Sgro asked for reassurance about how the Ambassador Bridge was being managed in terms of security and expansion. She was uncomfortable with the private sector management of the bridge in an era of rising threats and sought assurances that there was strategic planning being conducted by our two governments on the future of the bridge.

-- Jeff Watson, Conservative - Essex, Ontario, Ambassador Bridge Expansion: Like Sgro, Watson covers a riding whose current economy depends on the smooth operation of the Ambassador Bridge, and whose future economy depends on the expansion of the bridge. He is very interested in the ongoing negotiations over twinning and the third span and the various options for this, and wants to see a better bilateral planning process for the future of the cross border infrastructure. He is concerned by recent indications that the U.S. may not be fully supportive of the Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) planning process. "If the DRIC is undermined," Watson said, "there will be a free for all and the required infrastructure upgrades will be delayed," with potentially negative consequences for the cross border economy. NDP MP Brian Masse from Windsor similarly is concerned with rumors he has heard that officials on the Michigan side of the border are considering abandoning the bi-national planning process.

-- Watson, Pre-Clearance Negotiations: Watson would also like to see negotiations on pre-clearance continue. He basically expressed interest in anything that would help the border to function more efficiently and for vehicles and

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cargo to move more smoothly.

-- Gord Brown, Conservative, Leeds-Greenville, Ontario, Future Travel under WHTI: Brown said he owns hotels in the Greenville area and watches bookings closely. He said to date things are not bad and he has not seen an impact from WHTI jitters on cross border travel. He is concerned, however, with the impact of the WHTI requirements on group travel, and hopes that if we cannot change the passport requirement we will at the very least clarify the requirement so that groups and individuals can plan with certainty.

-- Peter Stoffer, NDP, Sackville, Eastern Shore, NS, SPP Impact on Labor and Environment: Stoffer is one of the more conservative of the NDP members, but nonetheless expressed concern to Poloff about the direction the SPP is headed. The NDP, he said, is primarily concerned about the impact on labor and the environment and has some detailed issues it would like to ensure are considered throughout the SPP process. He complained about lack of inclusiveness on the Canadian side during the discussions -- the NDP critic, Peter Julian was not invited to the Calgary talks, for example, nor were representatives of the Canadian Labor Congress. Stoffer said they would like to ensure that no one is left out of the discussions. He also said the NDP position is to keep some things off the table altogether as the process moves forward.

Finally he suggested we not use the word "integration" when discussing SPP, since people on his side of the political fence have a major problem with anything that smacks of Canada being pulled into the American orbit.

13. (SBU/NF) Comment: In these and other discussions with MPs we get a good sense for the range of issues they are facing in border ridings. They leave us with several observations. First, there is a need for constant dialogue on key issues. Canadians want to feel like they are part of the planning process and resent when we simply make decisions and inform

them. Second, they appreciate clarity. On WHTI and the Ambassador Bridge what hurts us most is simple lack of clarity about what will happen and when. Third, there is considerable disinformation about SPP and beating this back will take a concerted effort. On the Canadian side there may be more work to do to expand the circle of shareholders who are part of the process, ensuring all voices are heard as decisions are made.

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